2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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given island in order to be accepted as a natural member of the community. Members who are brought to the islands as spouses are recognized as members by association with a known island family, but even one who has been married to an islander for twenty or more years never achieves the status of a full member of the community.

Membership is most often established through oral transmission of lineage, as opposed to birth certificates or other documents. Thus one is expected to know one's lineage, for this knowledge can mean the difference between acceptance and rejection in any social setting. It is normal protocol, for example, for a young person to undergo seemingly intense interrogation by an older island resident who wishes to place the younger person. If one can explain satisfactorily who one's parents are, who one's parents' parents are, or even who one's cousins' parents are, then kinship is established and one is viewed as a member of the community to be accorded all due warmth and hospitality. The islanders can be chilly and sometimes openly hostile to strangers, black or white, who have no local kinship ties or affiliations.

As would be expected in such closed communities, familial ties, marriages, and the concept of the extended family are taken with utmost seriousness. The extended family is an African-like social tradition on the Sea Islands, just as it is in most inland black communities; acknowledging and readily accepting the obligations and responsibilities due not only to one's spouse but also to one's spouse's family is a part of island culture. The "conjugal bond is strong and literally lasts until death parts the spouses," and common-law marriages are as valid and stable in the eyes of the community as those marriages contracted under law. There is a low incidence of divorce and separation. Disagreements and conflicts do arise in Sea Island households, of course, as they do in any household. But understanding and accepting the relationships inherited in an extended family appear to alleviate many of the conflicts experienced in the sort of nuclear family that is characteristic of European cultures, such as mother-in-law/daughter-in-law antagonism. Like the members of extended families in Africa, people on the Sea Islands act with deference toward their elders, and most elders accord a great degree of respect to young adults, especially those with children. That is, conflicts are minimized because each member acknowledges and respects the others' domains.[44]

Most of the inhabitants of any given island are related; thus marriage between persons from the same island is not encouraged. Chil-